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Assessing the Structure of Binghamton University's Emerging Leaders Program

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Emerging Leaders Program

By

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Executive Summary

The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) is a multi-faceted student leadership program coordinated through Binghamton University's Office of New Student Programs and sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs. This capstone project was designed to assess the effectiveness of the "leadership team" component of the ELP, as well as identify areas of improvement. The leadership team component of the ELP plays a large role in the program achieving its desired outcomes. Therefore, the program has identified this component as an area needing further performance evaluation.

An extensive review of literature was performed on the themes of performance analysis in general and of performance analysis as it applies to student leadership programs. To answer the research question posed, I conducted twelve separate face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted with individuals from the 2011 ELP program who held one of three leadership team positions in the program: faculty advisor, staff advisor, or peer mentor. Four findings were identified: (1) the current leadership team structure (i.e. two peer mentors, one faculty advisor, and one staff advisor) is an effective structure that is meeting the four main objectives of the program; (2) individuals in each role of the leadership team would like more structured contact with one another, especially early on in the program; (3) some leadership team members did not understand the distinctions between different leadership team roles; and (4) the ELP met the learning outcomes associated with the peer mentor position during the fall of 2011. Based on these findings, I am making the following four recommendations to the ELP: (1) continue to use the current leadership team structure, and continue to assess its effectiveness every year; (2) structure more required time in the program for contact amongst the four members of the

leadership team, especially early on in the program; (3) clarify each member's role on the leadership team; and (4) establish a yearly assessment tied directly to the six established learning outcomes for the peer mentor position.

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Problem Statement

Binghamton University's Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) is coordinated through the University's Office of New Student Programs, which is a component of the University's Division of Student Affairs. The ELP is a multi-faceted program that helps Binghamton University students learn about and develop their own leadership skills. Four main objectives have been established for the ELP, including: (1) to connect new students to each other and the overall community, (2) to teach new students how to utilize the many resources available on campus, (3) to assist new students with developing an understanding of leadership and basic leadership skills, and (4) to assist peer mentors in developing a personal leadership philosophy and further enhance their leadership skills (Emerging Leaders Program, 2009).

One of the unique characteristics about the ELP is the high level of involvement needed from multiple campus representatives to make the program a success. Aside from the 80 incoming students who are involved in the program, there are two professional staff members overseeing the program, twelve peer mentor participants, six faculty member advisors from various departments, and six professional staff member advisors from various university offices, as well as one graduate student intern and four undergraduate interns for the fall 2012 term. The numbers of faculty/professional staff advisors, peer mentors, and program interns have increased in each of the program's three consecutive years.

The ELP currently does a fair amount in terms of assessing the outcomes of the incoming students' participation in the program. But currently, there is only minimal survey data available on the peer mentor role as well as little data assessing the effectiveness of the faculty/staff advisor role. Currently, peer mentors are asked a series of open-ended questions that relate to specific aspects of the program at the conclusion of the program. The only assessment that has been performed on the faculty/staff role is a self-evaluation conducted through a feedback session with the program director. The faculty and staff advisors in the program are asked the following questions: (1) What did you like most/least about the program?; (2) How did things go with your peer mentors?; (3) Did you have regular contact with your team (mentors, new students); and (4) Do you have any additional comments on the program? (Emerging Leaders Program, 2009). The peer mentors, faculty advisors, and staff advisors comprise the "leadership team" for the program and play an integral role in ELP's success; therefore significant assessment and development are needed to continue program growth and retention and to ensure the program is an overall success.

The primary goal of developing new student leadership skills cannot be achieved if the "core" of the program, the leadership team, is not adequately assessed and developed to its full capacity. Learning outcomes have been established for the peer mentor role, but little has been done to assess the program's impact on these outcomes. Objectives have also been established for the faculty/staff advisor role in the program, yet more assessment is needed to make sure these are being met. Since the ELP has a unique structure that contributes to the overall goal of new student leadership development, each component of the program must be assessed individually to ensure proper program development. By assessing each component of the ELP leadership team separately, the ELP administrators will be able to identify the program's strengths and weaknesses. This will allow the program to devote valuable time and resources to areas of the program that are in need of the most improvement.

Aside from benefiting the ELP, the implications of this research are also important to the field of public administration. Public organizations like Binghamton University need to be able to be accountable for their performance to the populations that they serve. Performance measurement systems are intended to produce objective information on program performance that can be used to grow and improve overall performance (Poister, 2003). This study will ultimately serve as a template for assessing and improving other multi-faceted programs in the field of public administration. Ideally this study will increase awareness of the importance for public organizations to monitor and adjust programs for increased performance, especially when the program is still relatively new. This capstone will research the following question:

Research Question

1.) How effective is the "leadership team" component of the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP), and how can it be improved?

Literature Review

To gain a better understanding of performance analysis and specifically how it applies to student leadership programs, I critically assessed scholarly literature from a variety of sources. The literature review focuses on two main topics: (1) performance analysis in general as it applies to public organizations and programs and (2) performance analysis in higher education and student affairs programs.

What is Performance Analysis?

Performance analysis is the measure of effectiveness of an existing program or service provided by an organization. Public organizations in particular need to have reliable performance analysis measures in place to maintain their accountability to key stakeholders within and outside of the organization (Behn, 2003; Kassel, 2008; Moynihan, 2005; De Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2001; Yang & Holzer, 2006). Every public organization and program is unique in what they choose to measure and how they choose to measure their performance (Behn, 2003; Nicholson-Crotty et. al, 2006; Moynihan, 2005; Poister, 2003; Yang & Holzer, 2006). Studies suggest that in general, public organizations seek to measure program effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, overall service quality, operating efficiency, and finally stakeholder satisfaction (Behn, 2003; Barnow & Heinrich, 2010; Kassel, 2008; Poister, 2003; Moynihan, 2008). No one measure of performance can provide all of the information that most public organizations hope to learn about their programs or services. Multiple authors have suggested that if public organizations really want to improve their programs and services while remaining accountable to multiple groups, they must employ multiple measures of performance frequently (Behn, 2008; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2006; Moynihan, 2008; Kassel, 2008).

Why Measure Performance?

Most public organizations measure performance so they can determine what is and what is not working with their programs or services. However, public organizations are increasingly using performance measures for more than just gauging where they need to improve. Several recent studies suggest that performance measures are also utilized to evaluate progress, serve as justification to stakeholders for continued support, dictate managerial authority, and finally to make accurate budget allotments (Behn, 2008; Barnow & Heinrich, 2010; Yang & Holzer, 2006; Yang, 2007). Public organizations need to remain accountable to the people they serve, and they are generally able to accomplish this through routine performance evaluations (Behn, 2003; Barnow & Heinrich, 2010; Kassel, 2008; Poister, 2003; Moynihan, 2008). However, some studies suggest that even if public organizations generate regular performance measurements for their programs and services, public trust for those programs and services is not guaranteed (Yang & Holzer, 2006; Heinrich, 2012). Other studies have suggested that performance measurement, although effective in maintaining accountability, gives public managers too much authority over their organizations (Behn, 2008; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2006; De Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2001).

How Can Performance Indicators Be Used Effectively?

Accountability aside, performance measurements will mean absolutely nothing to the organization unless they are used properly to further the program or service. Several scholars have argued that far too many public organizations have performance measurement systems in place so they "appear" accountable to their stakeholders (Behn, 2008; Kassel, 2008; Yang & Holzer, 2006; Heinrich, 2012). Public managers should not only appear accountable. They should also have a proper plan in place to modify and adjust programs or services based on performance assessments. However, having a plan in place may prove difficult because oversight and regulations by governing bodies can hamper public managers' ability to alter program or services (Kassel, 2008; Moynihan, 2005).

Overall, performance indicators help public managers learn about their programs and services. But, multiple scholars suggest that performance measurement is a two-step process that does not stop at the learning phase and that someone from within the organization must use what is learned to improve programming (Behn, 2008; Yang, 2007; Heinrich, 2012; Burnow & Heinrich, 2010). Scholars also caution public managers against searching for a single performance measure for all programs and services and instead urge them to develop multiple performance indicators tied to specific plans for service and programming improvement

(Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2006; Moynihan, 2005; Heinrich, 2012; Behn, 2008; Julnes & Holzer, 2001).

How is Performance Measurement Used in Higher Education and Student Affairs?

Public higher education institutions, like most other public organizations utilize performance analysis to remain accountable for their services and programs. In addition, public higher education programs and services utilize performance indicators to help guide resource allocation decisions as a strategy for dealing with frequent budget cuts (McLendon et al., 2006; Bresciani, 2011; Huisman & Currie, 2004). Some scholars also agree that performance measurements in public higher education institutions are increasingly being used as indicators for states deciding how and where they should be distributing their higher education resources (McLendon et al., 2006; Huisman & Currie, 2004).

Within the field of student affairs in higher education, assessment and performance analysis are frequently tied to what the program or service is hoping students participating will take away from their experience, or in other words the associated learning outcomes (Bresciani, 2011; Green et al., 2008; Doyle, 2004). Student affairs assessment scholars generally agree that in order for performance analysis indicators to benefit the program, the assessment must have well-defined learning outcomes, and the assessment must be performed with a clear plan to further develop the program based on what is learned (Green et. al, 2008; Bresciani, 2011).

How Should the Success of Student Leadership Programs be Assessed?

Many student affairs divisions support Student Leadership Programs (SLPs) at their universities, with many funding assessment programs specific to their needs. SLPs are designed to provide students with an understanding of leadership and how they can further enhance their leadership skills as they progress throughout their academic careers (Roberts, 2007; Komives et.

al, 2006; CAS, 2009). In terms of assessing SLPs, scholars agree that an SLP should have regular evaluations in place for their programs assessing at the very least student needs, student satisfaction, student learning outcomes, and overall programmatic success (CAS, 2009; Komives et al., 2006; Boatman, 1999). However complex an SLP is, assessing the program as a whole or assessing parts of the program can help determine and improve program quality, aid in strategic planning initiatives, and clarify the program's vision and mission (CAS, 2009; Komives et al., 2006). Most SLP assessment literature focuses on the end result of these programs. There is very little literature available on the performance analysis process associated in other areas of these programs.

The literature reviewed highlights the importance of establishing reliable performance analysis measures for public programs and the importance of assessment in higher education and student affairs. However, there is little research on how to best structure SLPs to maximize their impact. To address this gap in the literature, I interviewed various individuals who have held a leadership team role in the ELP.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the current leadership team component of the ELP. This section of my paper describes my data collection approach in detail, the strengths of this approach, the study's limitations and steps taken to minimize these limitations, and my data analysis approach.

Data Collection

To analyze the performance of the ELP leadership team, I conducted interviews as my sole data collection method. Prior to beginning my data collection, I followed proper

Binghamton University protocol for performing human subjects research by submitting a project proposal and all accompanying materials to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee (Appendix A). Once I received approval for my research, I randomly selected 12 individuals out of a possible 21 to participate in this study. The twelve individuals I interviewed participated in some capacity on the fall 2011 ELP leadership team. Three of those individuals participated in the staff advisor role, three of those individuals participated in the faculty advisor role, and six of those individuals participated in the peer mentor role. Initially, each one of these individuals was contacted by email to ask for their participation in this study, and follow up contact was made as needed (Appendix B). One individual declined to participate in the study due to time conflicts.. I continued randomly selecting subjects until a total of 12 interviewees agreed to participate in the study. Each interviewee was asked for their oral consent to participate in the study. Each interviewee was also asked to sign a consent form for audio recording purposes during the interview. Confidentiality was guaranteed to each of the interviewees for the purposes of this study, and all audio recordings were destroyed following the completion of this research.

During the interview process, each interviewee was asked a series of ten questions. Each of the ten questions were designed so that they could be answered by any of the three leadership team roles in the program – faculty advisor, staff advisor, or peer mentor. The basic topics covered in the interview questions included what the individuals liked and disliked most about the program, whether or not they felt the current structure of the leadership team was sufficient to meet program goals, and what they would like to see improved about the program.

I chose interviews as the sole data collection method for this research because I wanted to receive detailed information from those individuals participating in a leadership team role. I believe that the individuals interviewed possess a good understanding of what their positions entail and the goals of the program. Therefore, I believe they could provide valuable feedback that could be used to improve the leadership team component of the ELP. My interviews were semi-structured interviews: I asked all respondents a set number of open-ended questions (Appendix C) and allotted a significant amount of time at the end of each interview for open discussion about the participants' thoughts on their participation in the program. Using this format offered my respondents great flexibility in how they answered my questions.

Strengths of Study

There are many strengths to the interview approach. The most important strength was the large amount of data I was able to collect through the process. All of the interview questions that I asked were open-ended questions which allowed the respondents to give detailed descriptions about their experiences in the program and what they would like to see improved in the future. The open-ended nature of the questions also allowed me to ask follow-up and probing questions when appropriate.

Another strength of this study is the number of interviews that were conducted. By interviewing 12 individuals who were involved in the fall 2011 ELP leadership team, I interviewed more than 50% of the total number of individuals who served on the leadership team during the fall semester. The size of my sample increases my confidence that the experiences of the interviewees are representative of the overall leadership team's experiences.

One final strength is that using interviews allowed me to clarify any questions that interviewees had about my research. This study specifically aims to measure attitudes of participants in the program to determine where performance can be improved. As opposed to a survey methodology, the face-to-face interview approach allowed me to provide some background on my research before I asked my questions and to provide further clarification on various questions as the interview progressed.

Limitations

Although this methodology and study has many strengths, there are certain limitations that I have taken into account. The most significant threat to my research is the chance that interviewees responded to my questions by telling me the information that they thought I wanted to hear because I am so closely involved with the ELP. I took several steps to try and minimize this threat by offering complete confidentiality throughout the entire research project as well as avoiding any leading questions during my interviews.

Another significant limitation faced is the timeframe of the research. Some of the individuals I interviewed were currently involved in the fall 2012 ELP leadership team. My research focused on their experiences during the fall of 2011. Therefore, since some of these individuals returned to the program in the fall of 2012, there is a chance they were answering my questions based off their current ongoing experiences and not just those of last year. To minimize this risk, I informed all participants that I would like them to only focus on their 2011 experiences at the beginning of my interviews.

A final limitation of my methodology is that I was the only one analyzing the data. Since I am so closely tied to the program, there was a risk of my personal bias influencing how I interpreted what someone said in an interview. To minimize the risk, whenever appropriate I asked all interviewees to elaborate as much as possible on their experiences and the questions that I asked. In addition to this, I thoroughly analyzed the questions in advance of the interviews so as to avoid any questions that might be considered leading the respondent to an answer.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected during my interviews, I looked for specific themes in the interviewees' responses to my questions. During each interview, I took detailed notes, in addition to audio recording each interview session. The qualitative data that was collected was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed using a thematic coding sequence. For each of the ten questions asked, all of the interviewees' responses were assigned a theme. For example, when respondents were asked whether or not they would change the structure of the leadership team, their individual responses were categorized into yes, no, or not sure. During this data analysis, I searched for patterns across the interviews which have ultimately led to my findings and recommendations.

Findings

As a result of my data analysis, I have identified four main findings. First, the current leadership team structure (i.e. two peer mentors, one faculty advisor, and one staff advisor) is an effective structure that is meeting the four main objectives of the program. Second, individuals in each role of the leadership team would like more structured contact with one another, especially early on in the program. Third, some leadership team members did not understand the distinctions between different leadership team roles. Fourth, the ELP is doing a good job with meeting the learning outcomes associated with the peer mentor role.

Finding #1: The current leadership team structure (i.e. two peer mentors, one faculty advisor, and one staff advisor) is an effective structure that is meeting the four main objectives of the program.

All twelve of the interviewees were asked whether or not they felt the current structure of the ELP leadership team should be restructured. Overwhelmingly, the answer was no, and a clear majority of those interviewed felt that the current structure was conducive to meeting the four main objectives established for the program (Table 1). Two out of three faculty advisors interviewed for this study recommended that the ELP keep the current leadership team structure. For instance, one faculty advisor for the program stated:

> The current structure of the leadership team allows for everyone to learn from each other and share the knowledge they have about the campus. For example, I may know a lot of information about my knowledge community theme because it is so closely tied to my field of study; however the staff advisor and the peer mentors are tied into other resources on campus and in the community that I am not and those resources can be so useful to share with the new students in our group.

Consistent with faculty reports, all three staff advisors agreed that current structure of the leadership team helped the ELP program meet its objectives. Reflecting these sentiments, one staff advisor stated: "Each advisor and each peer mentor is connecting the students in our group to resources on campus and within the community as well as encouraging the new students to develop their understanding of and continue to practice leadership skills."

Table 1: Should the ELP restructure the leadership team component of the program?

	Faculty Advisor	**Staff Advisor**	**Peer Mentor**
Yes	8.3% (1)	(0)	8.3%(1)
No	16.6% (2)	25% (3)	41.6%(5)

When asked the same question, five out of the six peer mentors interviewed also stated that the ELP should not restructure the leadership team component of the program. The overwhelming consensus among the peer mentors was that two professional advisors and two co-mentors is the best dynamic for the leadership team. One peer mentor stated:

> In our particular group, our faculty advisor was unable to be as involved with the group as they had envisioned when they volunteered for the program. As peer mentors, this left

> us with really only our staff advisor, and we were really thankful to have that person there to help us when the other advisor could not.

Echoing similar statements another peer mentor commented:

> Absolutely keep the structure the same. There needs to be two advisors and two co-mentors because in this program they all have something of value to add. Also, some of the students participating in the program may feel more comfortable approaching one advisor or one mentor as opposed to the other, but it really depends on the group.

The one peer mentor who suggested the leadership structure should be changed commented that:

> One professional advisor (faculty or staff) may be easier for the overall dynamic of the group in that both the peer mentors and the new students will only be seeking out one individual rather than deciding which professional advisor to approach for assistance.

Finding #2: Individuals in each role of the leadership team would like more structured contact with one another, especially early on in the program.

Nine out of the twelve individuals interviewed stated they would like more structured contact with one another, especially before the program begins. Interviewees were never directly asked if they would like more contact with their team members. However, nine individuals still specifically mentioned this as an area for improvement.

Two faculty and two staff advisors commented that they would like more structured contact during their interviews. One faculty advisor was quoted as saying:

> I really wish I could have had the chance to meet more regularly with the two peer mentors assigned to my group. I also wish I had the opportunity to collaborate more with the staff advisor for our group. I believe if more time had been structured for us to all meet together, I would have had a better understanding of what was going on with my group and where I could best be of assistance. For next year, I would suggest that you build more time into the front end of the program, perhaps even in the spring semester, for the team to get acquainted with one another.

Additionally, a staff advisor noted:

> Our group struggled all semester with finding a common time to meet outside of the hour we had for our knowledge community meeting. This could have been our own fault, however I think that our group really could have benefitted had we had another hour set aside outside of our meeting time so that we could plan for our meeting.

Five of the six peer mentors interviewed stated that they found themselves having plenty of contact with their co-mentor but, they would have liked more structured contact with their faculty and staff advisors. Each of the five noted that they were able to find time to meet with their co-mentor. However, it was more difficult to arrange times to meet with their faculty and staff advisors prior to their weekly knowledge community meeting. One mentor commented:

> We regret not having a strong relationship with our faculty advisor. We probably could of done more to strengthen this relationship however due to time constraints most weeks we were unable to find a time to get together prior to our weekly meetings.

Adding to this issue, another mentor stated:

> I think we should be required to meet with our faculty and staff advisors anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour prior to our weekly knowledge community meetings. There were times when I would want to ask them how to approach a topic in the meeting however we were unable to meet prior to the meeting to discuss this.

Additionally, these five peer mentors also noted that while their team did a good job using e-mail to communicate, they would have preferred more face-to-face communication on a weekly basis.

Finding #3: Some leadership team members did not understand the distinctions between different leadership team roles.

An important weakness of ELP's leadership team structure was that many of the team members were unclear about each other's roles in the program and the distinctions among the different roles. The professional advisors and the peer mentors were clear on what their individual roles were supposed to be in the program. However, they weren't always sure about the roles of other leadership team members.

For example, two faculty and two staff advisors generally agreed that they knew they were to be serving as a resource for their groups but they were unclear about their role from week to week in the knowledge community meetings. Reflecting these sentiments, one faculty advisor stated:

> I was unsure when to take the lead of the discussion during our weekly meetings. I understand that the peer mentors are supposed to be doing a majority of the leading of discussion. However, there were times when the new students as well as the peer mentors would look to me to lead the discussion for a majority of the meeting.

One of the two staff advisors also noted, "There were several times throughout the semester when it was very challenging for me to play the role of a participant observer and not jump in and take control of certain discussion we had in our group."

In addition to the faculty and staff advisors being unsure of their roles during the weekly meetings, five of the six interviewed peer mentors stated that at times throughout the semester they were confused about what the role of their advisor was. One mentor commented, "There were times during the semester when I wasn't sure if I should be approaching my staff advisor or my faculty advisor for assistance." According to another mentor, "Sometimes my advisors played a large role in our meetings and sometimes they did not. My co-mentor and I were okay with whatever role they played. However I wish I knew what role that was going to be from week to week."

Finding #4: The Emerging Leaders Program met the learning outcomes associated with the peer mentor position during the fall of 2011.

Based on the work of Komives (2006) and Boatman (1999) which emphasize the importance of student leadership programs assessing if they are meeting the learning outcomes associated with the program, both the professional advisors and peer mentors were asked about this topic. All six peer mentors believe they were meeting the six established learning outcomes for the peer mentor position. The six faculty and staff advisors who were interviewed were also asked if they felt the peer mentors they worked with in the program had met those learning outcomes. Five of the six responded that they felt they had met the outcomes, and one responded that he did not have enough knowledge about the learning outcomes to determine whether or not they had been met.

The six peer mentors interviewed unanimously agreed that they felt their learning outcomes had been reached through their participation in the program. One peer mentor stated, “This experience absolutely met the established learning outcomes. I believe from this experience, I was able to grow as not only a student but a leader here at Binghamton University.” Another stated, “This experience being a mentor surpassed all of my expectations and certainly met each of the established learning outcomes.”

Most of the faculty and staff advisors concurred with the peer mentors and agreed that they felt the experience for the mentors met the learning outcomes. One staff advisor stated:

> I personally have been able to work with the program for two years now. I am not sure if the peers I worked with two years ago meet these outcomes. However, I know for a fact that the peers from last year did. I witnessed the two peer mentors who worked with my group develop their strengths and leadership skills throughout the semester. Our group ran into several challenges throughout the semester with the service learning project, However, they were able to guide the group through it.

To add to this, a faculty advisor noted:

> When I started working with my two peer mentors, I had some doubts about whether or not they were going to be able to keep the group together. I have advised various student groups in the past and I have seen some fall apart. These two students proved me wrong and in the process I believe they met every single one of those learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on my findings, I recommend the ELP take the following actions. First, continue using the current structure of the leadership team component of the program and assessing its effectiveness each year. Second, build more time into the program for contact between each of the four members of the leadership team, especially in the beginning of the program. Third, clarify the role of each leadership team position (peer mentor, faculty advisor, staff advisor). Fourth, establish a yearly assessment tied directly to the six established learning outcomes for the peer mentor position.

Recommendation #1: Continue to use the current leadership team structure, and continue to assess its effectiveness every year.

The Emerging Leaders Program should continue to utilize the current leadership team structure of one faculty advisor, one staff advisor, and two peer mentors. Ten of the twelve individuals interviewed for this research recommended that the program keep the same leadership team structure. As previously noted, this study only examined whether the leadership team structure was effective from the point of view of those who comprised the leadership team. Consistent with the claim made by Behn (2008), Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2006), Moynihan (2008), and Kassel (2008) suggesting that performance measures gain multiple perspectives to increase their reliability, future ELP assessment efforts should also include new student participants' attitudes towards the leadership team structure. Since the leadership team component of the ELP is so specific to this particular program, routinely assessing the impact of this area of the program is also consistent with what the CAS (2009) standards recommend for assessing student leadership programs.

Recommendation #2: Structure more required time in the program for contact amongst the four members of the leadership team, especially early on in the program.

The Emerging Leaders Program should structure more required time in the program for the four leadership team members to meet and discuss what they would like to cover from week to week. Currently, the program recommends that the peer mentors meet with their advisors prior to their weekly meetings with the new students. However, these meetings are not required. Nine out of the twelve individuals suggested that more required contact among each member of the leadership team would help.

Furthermore, one interviewee in Finding #2 recommended that the ELP structure more time in advance of the program's start date for the leadership team members to get to know one another and decide how they are going to approach their roles with the program. Drawing on this comment, the ELP should consider implementing a required training session for leadership team members in the spring semester before the official program for students begins in the fall. This will allow all leadership team members in the program to get to know each other prior to meeting the group of new students with whom they will work. It will also enable ELP staff to address any questions or concerns leadership team members might have.

Recommendation #3: Clarify each member's role on the leadership team.

When recruiting new leadership team members or asking existing team members to continue working with ELP, the program must do a better job of clarifying each position's role. Nine of the twelve individuals interviewed were unclear about what each team member's role was supposed to be in the program. In general, the leadership team members were clear on their role in the program. However, they did not fully understand the roles of other team members. Therefore, I recommend that the ELP clarify the role of each leadership team member (faculty advisor, staff advisor, and peer mentors) during the recruitment and selection process in the spring semester as well as throughout the fall semester to prevent any further confusion about the roles associated with the program.

Recommendation #4: Establish a yearly assessment tied directly to the six established learning outcomes for the peer mentor position.

The success of the Emerging Leaders Program relies heavily upon whether or not the program is meeting the learning outcomes associated with the peer mentor position. The peer mentors in the program have the most direct contact with the new students participating in the program. Therefore the learning outcomes of this position need to be met. Based upon my findings, the program met the learning outcomes during the fall of 2011. However, this was only an assessment of one year. Because the students serving in the peer mentor position change from year to year, I recommend the program establish a yearly assessment tied to measuring the program's success in meeting these six learning outcomes. Adding to the importance of implementing this recommendation were the comments made by one faculty advisor in Finding #4 indicating that one year they felt these learning outcomes had been met and one year they were unsure.

Conclusion

The ELP leadership team plays a large role in helping the program achieve its overall desired goals. The findings presented in this paper show four specific themes that emerged during twelve interviews with individuals in varying ELP leadership team roles: (1) the current ELP leadership team structure is working well; (2) ELP leadership team members are unclear about each other's roles in the program, (3) ELP leadership team members desire more contact with each other, and (4) the learning outcomes associated with the peer mentor position are being met. As the ELP moves forward with expected growth, the program should consider implementing the recommendations detailed in this capstone project.

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Appendix A
(IRB Approval)

Date: October 16, 2012

To: Tyler Lenga, DPA

From: Anne M. Casella, CIP Administrator
Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Subject: Human Subjects Research Approval
Protocol Number: 2068-12
Protocol title: *Emerging Leaders Program Study*

Your project identified above was reviewed by the HSRRC and has received an Exempt approval pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) .

An exempt status signifies that you will not be required to submit a Continuing Review application as long as your project involving human subjects remains unchanged. If your project undergoes any changes these changes must be reported to our office prior to implementation. Please complete the modification form found at the following link:http://research.binghamton.edu/Compliance/humansubjects/COEUS_Docs.php

Principal Investigators or any individual involved in the research must report any problems involving the conduct of the study or subject participation. Any problems involving recruitment and consent processes or any deviations from the approved protocol should be reported in writing within five (5) business days as outlined in Binghamton University, Human Subjects Research Review Office, Policy and Procedures IX.F.1 Unanticipated Problems/adverse events/complaints. We require that the Unanticipated Problems/adverse events/complaints form be submitted to our office, found at the following link: http://research.binghamton.edu/Compliance/humansubjects/COEUS_Docs.php

University policy requires you to maintain as a part of your records, any documents pertaining to the use of human subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to, and received from, the subjects, as well as any executed consent forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least six years after project completion or termination. If this is a funded project, you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representative of the University, State and Federal governments.

Please notify this office when your project is complete by completing and forwarding to our office the Protocol closure form found at the following link:http://research.binghamton.edu/Compliance/humansubjects/COEUS_Docs.php Upon notification we will close the above referenced file. Any reactivation of the project will require a new application.

This documentation is being provided to you via email. A hard copy will not be mailed unless you request us to do so.

Thank you for your cooperation, I wish you success in your research, and please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or require further assistance.
cc: file
Kristina Lambright

Diane Bulizak, Secretary
Human Subjects Research Review Office
Biotechnology Building, Room 2205
85 Murray Hill Rd.
Vestal, NY 13850 *dbulizak@binghamton.edu*

Appendix B
(Email Request for Interview)

To: (participants email)
From: (tlenga@binghamton.edu)
Re: Emerging Leaders Program Research – Interview Request

Hello,

I am Tyler Lenga, Program Coordinator for the Office of New Student Programs as well as a graduate student with the Department of Public Administration. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a research project on one of the programs I work on, the Emerging Leaders Program. This research project involves interviews about your participation in the program.

You are being contacted because you have been a participant in the Emerging Leaders Program during the fall of 2011.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with Binghamton University or the Emerging Leaders Program. If you decide to participate, you are not obligated to answer all questions, and may stop at any time.

If you agree, I would like to ask you some questions about your experience with the Emerging Leaders Program. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses are confidential and will be grouped with other individuals participating in the interviews.

If you have any additional questions later, you may contact me at any time (tlenga@binghamton.edu or 777-4329). If at any time you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject you may call Binghamton University's Human Subject's Research Review Committee at (607) 777-3818.

Appendix C
(Interview Questions)

Questions asked to all participants

1.) Based off your position description you received before you accepted the position, did the position end up being what you anticipated? Why or why not?
2.) What did you like about your involvement with the Emerging Leaders Program?
3.) What did you dislike about your involvement with the Emerging Leaders Program?
4.) How if at all do you think the new students benefitted from your involvement in the program?
5.) How if at all do you think others involved in the program benefitted from your involvement in the program?
6.) Would you change the current structure of the leadership team (i.e. one faculty advisor, one staff advisor, two peer mentors)? Why or why not?
7.) What challenges did you experience during your time the program?
   -How if at all did you address these challenges?
   - By yourself?
   - In collaboration with the leadership team?
   - Debbie/Tyler? Other?
8.) What is your leadership team relationship like?
   - How has communication been with peer mentor(s)?
   - How has communication been with advisors?
   - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the communication/relationship amongst the leadership team?
9.) Do you feel as though the learning outcomes associated with the peer mentor position were met? (review learning outcomes)
10.) Is there anything else you would like to share about your involvement with the program? Or is there anything else we haven't discussed that you would like to talk about?